Passage 3

The contribution of language to business

People say that business is all about relationships, but the truth is that business is really all about language communication. Languages make either a direct or indirect contribution to business and industry—from acquiring and retaining customers to improving employee engagement and performance. At the most fundamental level, business cannot happen without communication. This is even more true in the era of globalization. As geographic borders become porous and the world flattens, effective communication with customers, employees, partners, suppliers, and other stakeholders across the globe becomes essential to successfully running a company.

There is no universal agreement on how significant the language factor is; nor the degree of language proficiency in contribution to the success of business and industry. In large modern enterprises, people have the unique experience of working with thousands of organizations across different industries and sectors that are tackling this very problem. Companies adjust to these demographic, cultural, and economic trends and proactively build workforces with the skills and capabilities needed to grow and thrive in this multicultural and international economy. Although the combination of business functions and processes impacted by improved communication may vary from company to company, language skills consistently deliver tangible business value and results for organizations that invest in language training.

Although English is dominant for international transactions, many business people also think and deal in scores of languages. Companies that operate solely in English will miss opportunities to capitalize on the explosive growth in developing and untapped markets at home and abroad. These companies also run the risk of misunderstandings with customers, and with members of an increasingly global workforce. Moreover, travellers on business need to have different levels of language proficiency. On a basic level, they are able to use the language at the airport and to check in at the hotel. Besides, they need a high language proficiency to deal with workers at their offshore factories.

One of the biggest business advantages of a workforce that can effectively communicate in more than one language is the ability to reach new markets—both at home and abroad. On the domestic side, for example, the U.S. has become even more of a melting pot than in the past, with minorities accounting for a greater proportion of the total population. Accordingly, in domestic venues, the consumer contacts and service activities also ask for workers with good skills of different languages, such as at restaurants or in duty-free stores.

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage? In boxes 1-6 on your answer sheet, write

YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer
NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer
NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say that the writer thinks about this

1. There are two types of contribution that languages make to business.
2. All businesses have recognized the importance of language to business.
3. English is the most important language for all business purposes.
4. Senior executives, especially, need to be fluent in the language of their trading partners.
5. Travellers on business need several different levels of language proficiency.
6. Some businesses provide interpreter training to their employees.

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